

On Your Own, F. Scott Fitzgerald

I

The third time he walked around the deck Evelyn stared at him. She stood leaning against the bulwark and when she heard his footsteps again she turned frankly and held his eyes for a moment until his turned away, as a woman can when she has the protection of other men's company, Barlotto, playing ping-pong with Eddie O'Sullivan, noticed the encounter. "Aha!" he said, before the stroller was out of hearing, and when the rally was finished: "Then you're still interested even if it's not the German Prince."

"How do you know it's not the German Prince?" Evelyn demanded.

"Because the German Prince is the horse-faced man with white eyes. This one"—he took a passenger list from his pocket—"is either Mr George Ives, Mr Jubal Early Robbins and valet, or Mr Joseph Widdle with Mrs Widdle and six children."

It was a medium-sized German boat, five days westbound from Cherbourg. The month was February and the sea was dingy grey and swept with rain. Canvas sheltered all the open portions of the promenade deck, even the ping-pong table was wet.

K'tap K'tap K'tap K'tap. Barlotto looked like Valentino—since he got fresh in the rumba number she had disliked playing opposite him. But Eddie O'Sullivan had been one of her best friends in the company.

Subconsciously she was waiting for the solitary promenader to round the deck again but he didn't. She faced about and looked at the sea through the glass windows; instantly her throat closed and she held herself dose to the wooden rail to keep her shoulders from shaking. Her thoughts rang aloud in her ears: "My father is dead—when I was little we would walk to town on Sunday morning, I in my starched dress, and he would buy the Washington paper and a cigar and he was so proud of his pretty little girl. He was always so proud of me—he came to New York to see me when I opened with the Marx Brothers and he told everybody in the hotel he was my father, even the elevator boys. I'm glad he did, it was so much pleasure for him, perhaps the best time he ever had since he was young. He would like it if he knew I was coming all the way from London."

"Game and set," said Eddie.

She turned around. "We'll go down and wake up the Barneys and have some bridge, eh?" suggested Barlotto.

Evelyn led the way, pirouetting once and again on the moist deck, then breaking into an "Off to Buffalo" against a sudden breath of wet wind. At the door she slipped and fell inward down the stair, saved herself by a perilous one-arm swing—and was brought up against the solitary promenader. Her mouth fell open comically—she balanced for a moment Then the man said, "I beg your pardon," in an unmistakably southern voice. She met his eyes again as the three of them passed on. The man picked up Eddie O'Sullivan in the smoking room the next afternoon.

"Aren't you the London cast of Chronic Affection?"

"We were until three days ago. We were going to run another two weeks but Miss Lovejoy was called to America so we closed."

"The whole cast on board?" The man's curiosity was inoffensive, it was a really friendly interest combined with a polite deference to the romance of the theatre. Eddie O'Sullivan liked him.

"Sure, sit down. No, there's only Barlotto, the juvenile, and Miss Lovejoy and Charles Barney, the producer, and his wife. We left in twenty-four hours—the others are coming on the Homeric."

"I certainly did enjoy seeing your show. I've been on a trip around the world and I turned up in London two weeks ago just ready for something American—and you had it."

An hour later Evelyn poked her head around the corner of the smoking-room door and found them there.

"Why are you hiding out on us?" she demanded. "Who's going to laugh at my stuff? That bunch of card sharps down there?"

Eddie introduced Mr George Ives. Evelyn saw a handsome, well-built man of thirty with a firm and restless face. At the corners of his eyes two pairs of fine wrinkles indicated an effort to meet the world on some other basis than its own. On his pan George Ives saw a rather small dark-haired girl of twenty-six, burning with a vitality that could only be described as "professional". Which is to say it was not amateur—it could never use itself up upon any one person or group. At moments it possessed her so entirely, turning every shade of expression, every casual gesture, into a thing of such moment that she seemed to have no real self of her own. Her mouth was made of two small intersecting cherries pointing off into a bright smile; she had enormous, dark brown eyes. She was not beautiful but it took her only about ten seconds to persuade people that she was. Her body was lovely with little concealed muscles of iron. She was in black now and overdressed—she was always very chic and a little overdressed.

"I've been admiring you ever since you hurled yourself at me yesterday afternoon," he said.

"I had to make you some way or other, didn't I? What's a girl going to with herself on a boat—fish?" They sat down.

"Have you been in England long?" George asked. "About five years—I go bigger over there." In its serious moments her voice had the ghost of a British accent. "I'm not really very good at anything—I sing a little, dance a little, down a little, so the English think they're getting a bargain. In New York they want specialists."

It was apparent that she would have preferred an equivalent popularity in New York.

Barney, Mrs Barney and Barlotto came into the bar. "Aha!" Barlotto cried when George Ives was introduced. "She won't believe he's not the Prince." He put his hand on George's knee. "Miss Lovejoy was looking for the Prince the first day when she heard he was on board. We told her it was you."

Evelyn was weary of Barlotto, weary of all of them, except Eddie O'Sullivan, though she was too tactful to have shown it when they were working together. She looked around. Save for two Russian priests playing chess their party was alone in the smoking-room—there were only thirty

first-class passengers, with accommodations for two hundred. Again she wondered what sort of an America she was going back to. Suddenly the room depressed her—it was too big, too empty to fill and she felt the necessity of creating some responsive joy and gaiety around her.

"Let's go down to my salon," she suggested, pouring all her enthusiasm into her voice, making them a free and thrilling promise. "We'll play the phonograph and send for the handsome doctor and the chief engineer and get them in a game of stud. I'll be the decoy."

As they went downstairs she knew she was doing this for the new man.

She wanted to play to him, show him what a good time she could give people. With the phonograph wailing "You're driving me crazy" she began building up a legend. She was a "gun moll" and the whole trip had been a I frame to get Mr Ives into the hands of the mob. Her throaty mimicry flicked here and there from one to the other; two ship's officers coming in were caught up in it and without knowing much English still understood the verve and magic of the impromptu performance. She was Anne Pennington, Helen Morgan, the effeminate waiter who came in for an order, she was everyone there in turn, and all in pace with the ceaseless music.

Later George Ives invited them all to dine with him in the upstairs restaurant that night. And as the party broke up and Evelyn's eyes sought his approval he asked her to walk with him before dinner.

The deck was still damp, still canvassed in against the persistent of rain. The lights were a dim and murky yellow and blankets tumbled awry on empty deck chairs.

"You were a treat," he said. "You're like—Mickey Mouse."

She took his arm and bent double over it with laughter.

"I like being Mickey Mouse. Look—there's where I stood and stared you every time you walked around. Why didn't you come around the fourth time?"

"I was embarrassed so I went up to the boat deck."

As they turned at the bow there was a great opening of doors and a flooding out of people who rushed to the rail.

"They must have had a poor supper," Evelyn said. "No—look!"

It was the Europa—a moving island of light. It grew larger minute by minute, swelled into a harmonious fairyland with music from its deck and searchlights playing on its own length. Through field-glasses they could discern figures lining the rail and Evelyn spun out the personal history of a man who was pressing his own pants in a cabin. Charmed they watched its sure matchless speed.

"Oh, Daddy, buy me that!" Evelyn cried, and then something suddenly broke inside her—the sight of beauty, the reaction to her late excitement choked her up and she thought vividly of her father. Without a word she went inside.

Two days later she stood with George Ives on the deck while the gaunt scaffolding of Coney Island slid by.

"What was Barlotto saying to you just now?" she demanded.

George laughed.

"He was saying just about what Barney said this afternoon, only he was more excited about it."

She groaned.

"He said that you played with everybody—and that I was foolish if I thought this little boat flirtation meant anything—everybody had been through being in love with you and nothing ever came of it."

"He wasn't in love with me," she protested. "He got fresh in a dance we had together and I called him for it."

"Barney was wrought up too—said he felt like a father to you."

"They make me tired," she exclaimed. "Now they think they're in love with me just because—"

"Because they see I am."

"Because they think I'm interested in you. None of them were so eager until two days ago. So long as I make them laugh it's all right but the minute I have any impulse of my own they all bustle up and think they're being so protective. I suppose Eddie O'Sullivan will be next."

"It was my fault telling them we found we lived only a few miles from each other in Maryland."

"No, it's just that I'm the only decent-looking girl on an eight-day boat, and the boys are beginning to squabble among themselves. Once they're in New York they'll forget I'm alive."

Still later they were together when the city burst thunderously upon them in the early dusk—the high white range of lower New York swooping down like a strand of a bridge, rising again into uptown New York, hallowed with diadems of foamy light, suspended from the stars.

"I don't know what's the matter with me," Evelyn sobbed. "I cry so much lately. Maybe I've been handling a parrot."

The German band started to play on deck but the sweeping majesty of the city made the inarch trivial and tinkling; after a moment it died away.

"Oh, God! It's so beautiful," she whispered brokenly.

If he had not been going south with her the affair would probably have ended an hour later in the customs shed. And as they rode south to Washington next day he receded for the moment and her father came nearer. He was just a nice American who attracted her physically—a little necking behind a lifeboat in the darkness. At the iron grating in the Washington station where their ways divided she kissed him good-bye and for the time forgot him altogether as her train shambled down into the low-forested clayland of southern Maryland. Screening her eyes with her hands Evelyn looked out upon the dark infrequent villages and the scattered farm lights. Rocktown was a shrunken little station and there was her brother with a neighbour's Ford—she was ashamed that her luggage was so good against the exploded upholstery. She saw a star she knew and heard Negro

laughter from out of the night; the breeze was cool but in it there was some smell she recognized—she was home.

At the service next day in the Rocktown churchyard, the sense that she was on a stage, that she was being watched, froze Evelyn's grief—then it was over and the country doctor lay among a hundred Lovejoys and Dorseys and Crawshaws. It was very friendly leaving him there with all his relations around him. Then as they turned from the graveside her eyes fell

on George Ives who stood a little apart with his hat in his hand. Outside the gate he spoke to her.

"You'll excuse my coming. I had to see that you were all right."

"Can't you take me away somewhere now?" she asked impulsively. "I can't stand much of this. I want to go to New York tonight."

His face fell. "So soon?"

"I've got to be learning a lot of new dance routines and freshening up my stuff. You get sort of stale abroad."

He called for her that afternoon, crisp and shining as his coupe. As they started off she noticed that the men in the gasoline stations seemed to know him with liking and respect. He fitted into the quickening spring landscape, into a legendary Maryland of graciousness and gallantry. He had not the range of a European; he gave her little of that constant reassurance as to her attractiveness—there were whole half-hours when he seemed scarcely aware of her at all.

They stopped once more at the churchyard—she brought a great armful of flowers to leave as a last offering on her father's grave. Leaving him at the gate she went in.

The flowers scattered on the brown unsettled earth. She had no more ties here now and she did not know whether she would come back any more. She knelt down. All these dead, she knew them all, their weather-beaten faces with hard blue flashing eyes, their spare violent bodies, their souls made of new earth in the long forest-heavy darkness of the seventeenth century. Minute by minute the spell grew on her until it was hard to struggle back to the old world where she had dined with kings and princes, where her name in letters two feet high challenged the curiosity of the night. A line of William McFee's surged through her:

O staunch old heart that toiled so long for me
I waste my years sailing along the sea.

The words released her—she broke suddenly and sat back on her heels, crying.

How long she was staying she didn't know; the flowers had grown invisible when a voice called her name from the churchyard and she got up and wiped her eyes.

"I'm coming." And then, "Good-bye then Father, all my fathers."

George helped her into the car and wrapped a robe around her. Then he took a long drink of country rye from his flask.

"Kiss me before we start," he said suddenly.

She put up her face towards him.

"No, really kiss me."

"Not now."

"Don't you like me?"

"I don't feel like it, and my face is dirty."

"As if that mattered."

His persistence annoyed her.

"Let's go on," she said.

He put the car into gear.

"Sing me a song."

"Not now, I don't feel like it."

He drove fast for half an hour—then he stopped under thick sheltering trees.

"Time for another drink. Don't you think you better have one—it's getting cold."

"You know I don't drink. You have one."

"If you don't mind."

When he had swallowed he turned towards her again.

"I think you might kiss me now."

Again she kissed him obediently but he was not satisfied.

"I mean really," he repeated. "Don't hold away like that. You know I'm in love with you and you say you like me."

"Of course I do," she said impatiently, "but there are times and times. This isn't one of them. Let's go on."

"But I thought you liked me."

"I won't if you act this way."

"You don't like me then."

"Oh don't be absurd," she broke out, "of course I like you, but I want to get to Washington."

"We've got lots of time." And then as she didn't answer, "Kiss me once before we start."

She grew angry. If she had liked him less she could have laughed him out of this mood. But there was no laughter in her—only an increasing distaste for the situation.

"Well," he said with a sigh, "this car is very stubborn. It refuses to start until you kiss me." He put his hand on hers but she drew hers away.

"Now look here." Her temper mounted into her cheeks, her forehead. "If there was anything you could do to spoil everything it was just this. I thought people only acted like this in cartoons. It's so utterly crude and"—she searched for a word—"and American. You only forgot to call me „baby“."

"Oh." After a minute he started the engine and then the car. The lights of Washington were a red blur against the sky.

"Evelyn," he said presently. "I can't think of anything more natural than wanting to kiss you, I—"

"Oh, it was so clumsy," she interrupted. "Half a pint of corn whisky and then telling me you wouldn't start the car unless I kissed you. I'm not used to that sort of thing. I've always had men treat me with the greatest delicacy. Men have been challenged to duels for staring at me in a casino—and then you, that I liked so much, try a thing like that. I can't stand it—" And again she repeated, bitterly "It's so American."

"Well, I haven't any sense of guilt about it but I'm sorry I upset you."

"Don't you see?" she demanded. "If I'd wanted to kiss you I'd have managed managed to let you know."

"I'm terribly sorry," he repeated. They had dinner in the station buffet. He left her at the door of her pullman car.

"Good-bye," she said, but coolly now, "Thank you for an awfully interesting trip. And call me up when you come to New York."

"Isn't this silly," he protested. "You're not even going to kiss me good-bye."

She didn't want to at all now and she hesitated before leaning forward lightly from the step. But this time he drew back.

"Never mind," he said. "I understand how you feel. I'll see you when I come to New York."

He took off his hat, bowed politely and walked away. Feeling very alone and lost Evelyn went on into the car. That was for meeting people on boats, she thought, but she kept on feeling strangely alone.

II

She climbed a network of steel, concrete and glass, walked under a high echoing dome and came out into New York. She was part of it even before she reached her hotel. When she saw mail waiting for her and flowers around her suite, she was sure she wanted to live and work here with this great current of excitement flowing through her from dawn to dusk.

Within two days she was putting in several hours a morning Umbering up neglected muscles, an hour of new soft-shoe stuff with Joe Crusoe, and

making a tour of the city to look at every entertainer who had something new.

Also she was weighing the prospects for her next engagement. In the background was the chance of going to London as a co-featured player in a Gershwin show then playing New York. Yet there was an air of repetition about it. New York excited her and she wanted to get something here. This was difficult—she had little following in America, show business was in a bad way—after a while her agent brought her several offers for shows that were going into rehearsal this fall. Meanwhile she was getting a little in debt and it was convenient that there were almost always men to take her to dinner and the theatre.

March blew past. Evelyn learned new steps and performed in half a dozen benefits; the season was waning. She dickered with the usual young impresarios who wanted to "build something around her", but who seemed never to have the money, the theatre and the material at one and the same time. A week before she must decide about the English offer she heard from George Ives.

She heard directly, in the form of a telegram announcing his arrival, and indirectly in the form of a comment from her lawyer when she mentioned the fact. He whistled.

"Woman, have you snared George Ives? You don't need any more jobs. A lot of girls have worn out their shoes chasing him."

"Why, what's his claim to fame?"

"He's rich as Croesus—he's the smartest young lawyer in the South, and they're trying to run him now for governor of his state. In his spare time he's one of the best polo players in America." Evelyn whistled. "This is news," she said.

She was startled. Her feelings about him suddenly changed—everything he had done began to assume significance. It impressed her that while she had told him all about her public self he had hinted nothing of this. Now she remembered him talking aside with some ship reporters at the dock.

He came on a soft poignant day, gentle and spirited. She was engaged for lunch but he picked her up at the Ritz afterwards and they drove in Central Park. When she saw in a new revelation his pleasant eyes and his mouth that told how hard he was on himself, her heart swung towards him—she told him she was sorry about that night.

"I didn't object to what you did but to the way you did it," she said. "It's all forgotten. Let's be happy."

"It all happened so suddenly," he said. "It was disconcerting to look up suddenly on a boat and see the girl you've always wanted."

"It was nice, wasn't it?"

"I thought that anything so like a casual flower needn't be respected. But that was all the more reason for treating it gently."

"What nice words," she teased him. "If you keep on I'm going to throw myself under the wheels of the cab."

Oh, she liked him. They dined together and went to a play and in the taxi going back to her hotel she looked up at him and waited.

"Would you consider marrying me?"

"Yes, I'd consider marrying you."

"Of course if you married me we'd live in New York."

"Call me Mickey Mouse," she said suddenly.

"Why?"

"I don't know—it was fun when you called me Mickey Mouse."

The taxi stopped at her hotel.

"Won't you come in and talk for a while?" she asked. Her bodice was stretched tight across her heart. "Mother's here in New York with me and I promised I'd go and see her for a while."

"Oh."

"Will you dine with us tomorrow night?"

"All right."

She hurried in and up to her room and put on the phonograph.

"Oh, gosh, he's going to respect me," she thought. "He doesn't know anything about me, he doesn't know anything about women. He wants to make a goddess out of me and I want to be Mickey Mouse." She went to the mirror swaying softly before it.

Lady play your mandolin Lady let that tune begin. At her agent's next morning she ran into Eddie O'Sullivan.

"Are you married yet?" he demanded. "Or did you ever see him again?"

"Eddie, I don't know what to do. I think I'm in love with him but we're always out of step with each other."

"Take him in hand."

"That's just what I don't want to do. I want to be taken in hand myself."

"Well, you're twenty-six—you're in love with him. Why don't you marry him? It's a bad season."

"He's so American," she answered.

"You've lived abroad so long that you don't know what you want."

"It's a man's place to make me certain." It was in a mood of revolt against what she felt was to be an inspection that she made a midnight rendezvous for afterwards to go to Chaplin's film with two other men—"because I frightened him in Maryland and he'll only leave me politely at my door". She pulled all her dresses out of her wardrobe and defiantly chose a startling gown from Vionnet; when George called for her at seven

she summoned him up to her suite and displayed it, half hoping he would protest. "Wouldn't you rather I'd go as a convent girl?"

"Don't change anything. I worship you." But she didn't want to be worshipped.

It was still light outside and she liked being next to him in the car. She felt fresh and young under the fresh young silk—she would be glad to ride with him for ever, if only she were sure they were going somewhere.

... The suite at the Plaza dosed around them; lamps were lighted in the salon.

"We're really almost neighbours in Maryland," said Mrs Ives. "Your name's familiar in St Charles county and there's a fine old house called Lovejoy Hall. Why don't you buy it and restore it?"

"There's no money in the family," said Evelyn bluntly. "I'm the only hope, and actresses never save."

When the other guest arrived Evelyn started. Of all shades of her past—Colonel Cary. She wanted to laugh, or else hide—for an instant she wondered if this had been calculated. But she saw in his surprise that it was impossible.

"Delighted to see you again," he said simply.

As they sat down at table Mrs Ives remarked:

"Miss Lovejoy is from our part of Maryland."

"I see," Colonel Cary looked at Evelyn with the equivalent of a wink. His expression annoyed her and she flushed. Evidently he knew nothing about her success on the stage, remembered only an episode of six years ago. When champagne was served she let a waiter fill her glass lest Colonel Cary think that she was playing an unsophisticated role.

"I thought you were a teetotaler," George observed.

"I am. This is about the third drink I ever had in my life."

The wine seemed to clarify matters; it made her see the necessity of anticipating whatever the Colonel might afterwards tell the Ives. Her glass was filled again. A little later Colonel Cary gave an opportunity when he asked:

"What have you been doing all these years?"

"I'm on the stage." She turned to Mrs Ives. "Colonel Cary and I met in my most difficult days."

"Yes?"

The Colonel's face reddened but Evelyn continued steadily.

"For two months I was what used to be called a „party girl“."

"A party girl?" repeated Mrs Ives puzzled.

"It's a New York phenomenon," said George.

Evelyn smiled at the Colonel. "It used to amuse me."

"Yes, very amusing," he said.

"Another girl and I had just left school and decided to go on the stage. We waited around agencies and offices for months and there were literally days when we didn't have enough to eat."

"How terrible," said Mrs Ives.

"Then somebody told us about „party girls“. Businessmen with clients from out of town sometimes wanted to give them a big time—singing a dancing and champagne, all that sort of thing, make them feel like regular fellows seeing New York. So they'd hire a room in a restaurant and invite a dozen party girls. All it required was to have a good evening dress and to sit next to some middle-aged man for two hours and laugh at his jokes and maybe kiss him good night. Sometimes you'd find a fifty-dollar bill in your napkin when you sat down at table. It sounds terrible, doesn't it—but it was salvation to us in that awful three months."

A silence had fallen, short as far as seconds go but so heavy that Evelyn felt it on her shoulders. She knew that the silence was coming from some deep place in Mrs Ives's heart, that Mrs Ives was ashamed for her and felt that what she had done in the struggle for survival was unworthy of the dignity of woman. In those same seconds she sensed the Colonel chuckling maliciously behind his bland moustache, felt the wrinkles beside George's eyes straining.

"It must be terribly hard to get started on the stage," said Mrs Ives. "Tell me—have you acted mostly in England?"

"Yes."

What had she said? Only the truth and the whole truth in spite of the old man leering there. She drank off her glass of champagne.

George spoke quickly, under the Colonel's roar of conversation: "Isn't that a lot of champagne if you're not used to it?"

She saw him suddenly as a man dominated by his mother; her frank little reminiscence had shocked him. Things were different for a girl on her own and at least he should see that it was wiser than that Colonel Cary might launch dark implications thereafter. But she refused further champagne.

After dinner she sat with George at the piano.

"I suppose I shouldn't have said that at dinner," she whispered.

"Nonsense! Mother know everything's changed nowadays."

"She didn't like it," Evelyn insisted. "And as for that old boy that looks like a Peter Arno cartoon!"

Try as she might Evelyn couldn't shake off the impression that some slight had been put upon her. She was accustomed only to having approval and admiration around her.

"If you had to choose again would you choose the stage?" Mrs Ives asked.

"It's a nice life," Evelyn said emphatically. "If I had daughters with talent I'd choose it for them. I certainly wouldn't want them to be society girls."

"But we can't all have talent," said Colonel Cary.

"Of course most people have the craziest prejudices about the stage," pursued Evelyn.

"Not so much nowadays," said Mrs Ives. "So many nice girls go on the stage."

"Girls of position," added Colonel Cary.

"They don't usually last very long," said Evelyn. "Every time some debutante decides to dazzle the world there's another flop due on Broadway. But the thing that makes me maddest is the way people condescend. I remember one season on the road—all the small-town social leaders inviting you to parties and then whispering and snickering in the corner. Snickering at Gladys Knowles!" Evelyn's voice rang with indignation: "When Gladys goes to Europe she dines with the most prominent people in every country, the people who don't know these backwoods social leaders exist—"

"Does she dine with their wives too?" asked Colonel Cary.

"With their wives too." She glanced sharply at Mrs Ives. "Let me tell you that girls on the stage don't feel a bit inferior, and the really fashionable people don't think of patronizing them."

The silence was there again heavier and deeper, but this time excited by her own words Evelyn was unconscious of it.

"Oh, it's American women," she said. "The less they have to offer the more they pick on the ones that have."

She drew a deep breath, she felt that the room was stifling.

"I'm afraid I must go now," she said.

"I'll take you," said George.

They were all standing. She shook hands. She liked George's mother, who after all had made no attempt to patronize her.

"It's been very nice," said Mrs Ives.

"I hope we'll meet soon. Good night."

With George in a taxi she gave the address of a theatre on Broadway.

"I have a date," she confessed.

"I see."

"Nothing very important." She glanced at him, and put her hand on his. Why didn't he ask her to break the date? But he only said:

"He better go over Forty-fifth Street."

Ah, well, maybe she'd better go back to England—and be Mickey Mouse, He didn't know anything about women, anything about love, and to her that was the unforgivable sin. But why in a certain set of his face under the street lamps did he remind her of her father?

"Won't you come to the picture?" she suggested.

"I'm feeling a little tired—I'm turning in."

"Will you phone me tomorrow?"

"Certainly."

She hesitated. Something was wrong and she hated to leave him. He helped her out of the taxi and paid it.

"Come with us?" she asked almost anxiously. "Listen, if you like—"

"I'm going to walk for a while!"

She caught sight of the men waiting for her and waved to them.

"George, is anything the matter?" she said.

"Of course not."

He had never seemed so attractive, so desirable to her. As her friends came up, two actors, looking like very little fish beside him, he took off his hat and said:

"Good night, I hope you enjoy the picture."

"George—"

— and a curious thing happened. Now for the first time she realized that her father was dead, that she was alone. She had thought of herself as being self-reliant, making more in some seasons than his practice brought him in five years. But he had always been behind her somewhere, his love had always been behind her—She had never been a waif, she had always had a place to go. And now she was alone, alone in the swirling indifferent crowd. Did she expect to love this man, who offered her so much, with the naive romantics of eighteen. He loved her—he loved her more than any one in the world loved her. She wasn't ever going to be a great star, she knew that, and she had reached the time when a girl had to look out for herself. "Why, look," she said, "I've got to go. Wait—or don't wait." Catching up her long gown she sped up Broadway. The crowd was enormous as theatre after theatre eddied out to the sidewalks. She sought for his silk hat as for a standard, but now there were many silk hats. She peered frantically into groups and crowds as she ran. An insolent voice called after her and again she shuddered with a sense of being unprotected. Reaching the corner she peered hopelessly into the tangled mass of the block ahead. But he had probably turned off Broadway so she darted left down the dimmer alley of Forty-eighth Street. Then she saw him, walking briskly, like a man leaving something behind—and overtook him at Sixth Avenue.

"George," she cried.

He turned; his face looking at her was hard and miserable. "George, I didn't want to go to that picture, I wanted you to make me not go. Why didn't you ask me not to go?"

"I didn't care whether you went or not."

"Didn't you?" she cried. "Don't you care for me any more?"

"Do you want me to call you a cab?"

"No, I want to be with you."

"I'm going home."

"I'll walk with you. What is it, George? What have I done?" They crossed Sixth Avenue and the street became darker. "What is it, George? Please tell me. If I did something wrong at your mother's why didn't you stop me?" He stopped suddenly. "You were our guest," he said. "What did I do?"

"There's no use going into it." He signalled a passing taxi. "It's quite obvious that we look at things differently. I was going to write you tomorrow but since you ask me it's just as well to end it today." "But why, George?" She wailed, "What did I do?" "You went out of your way to make a preposterous attack on an old gentlewoman who had given you nothing but courtesy and consideration." "Oh, George, I didn't, I didn't... I'll go to her and apologize. I'll go tonight."

"She wouldn't understand. We simply look at things in different ways."

"Oh-h-h." She stood aghast.

He started to say something further, but after a glance at her he opened the taxi door.

"It's only two blocks. You'll excuse me if I don't go with you."

She had turned and was clinging to the iron railing of a stair.

"I'll go in a minute," she said. "Don't wait."

She wasn't acting now. She wanted to be dead. She was crying for her father, she told herself—not for him but for her father.

His footsteps moved off, stopped, hesitated—came back.

"Evelyn."

His voice was close beside her.

"Oh, poor baby," it said. He turned her about gently in his arms and she clung to him.

"Oh yes," she cried in wild relief. "Poor baby—just your poor baby." She didn't know whether this was love or not but she knew with all her heart and soul that she wanted to crawl into his pocket and be safe for ever.

Comments

"On Your Own" was written as "Home to Maryland" in the spring of 1931 after Fitzgerald's return to Europe from his father's funeral, a strongly emotional event for him. Edward Fitzgerald was buried in the little cemetery of St Mary's Catholic Church on Rockville, Maryland—changed to "Rocktown" in the story—now a suburb of Washington, but then the sleepy county seat where he had been raised during and after the Civil War. "Then it was over," the story says, "and the country doctor lay among a hundred Lovejoys and Dorseys and Crawshaws."

This story shows the way Fitzgerald took an emotion and wove his hyperbolic magic around it. Though he had no ancestors named Lovejoy or Crawshaw, he was indeed descended from a long line of imposing Dorseys going back to the original Edward, who moved to Maryland from Virginia in 1650. Not a Dorsey is buried at St Mary's but a few Scotts, with whom they intermarried, are, inspiring the line repeated in Tender Is the Night, "It was very friendly leaving Mm there with all his relations around him." Later in the story, the heroine is asked why she doesn't buy and restore "a fine old house called Lovejoy Hall" in "St Charles County", which had belonged to one of her Lovejoy forebears. This is a reference to "Tudor Half, home of Fitzgerald's great-great-grandfather Philip Key, a member of the Continental Congress, in the southern Maryland county of St Mary's. It was for sale at that time, as he must have heard from relatives at the funeral.

Over the five years after it was written, "On Your Own" was declined by seven magazines, the first time this had happened to a Fitzgerald story since his apprentice days. It is one of the stories he "stripped" for his Notebooks, salvaging favourite passages for later use. "On Your Own" is included here because it is the only remaining unpublished story bearing, in his words, that "one little drop of something ... the extra I had."

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